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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF CHANGING COMMUNITY LIFE
ON CHILD-REARING PATTERNS IN A SMALL, RURAL,
MAORI COMMUNITY.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for degree of
Master of Arts in Social Anthropology
at Massey University.

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Julia Te Urikore Taiapa
1980

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CONTENTS

Lists of Figures and Tables

Introduction	1
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PART ONE

1. HISTORY AND LOCATION	2
Location	2
Hicks Bay's Relationship with Te-Whanau-a-Apanui	2
The Hicks Bay Community	4
Hicks Bay's Beginnings	5
Ruawaipu - Ngai-Tuere Alliance	7
The Story of Tuwhakairiora	9
The Comming of the Pakeha	12
Missionaries and Religion	13
The Ringatu Church	14
Tohunga	15
Education	
References for Chapter One	19
2. KINSHIP AND DESCENT IN HICKS BAY	21
Ngati Ruawaipu	23
Nga Oho and Ngai Tuere	24
Whakapapa or Genealogical Charters	27
Choice of Affiliation	29
References for Chapter Two	32
3. COMMUNITY AND FAMILY	33
Marae	34
Hinemaurea Marae Committee	35
Extensions of Hinemaurea Marae Committee	36
Maori Womens Welfare League	37
Patangata Youth Club	38
Family	39
Leadership	42
Ceremonial Leadership	43
Internal Leadership of the Family	43
Administrative Leadership	43
Manual Leadership	44
References for Chapter Three	45

4.	ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS	46
	A Changing Economy	47
	Sheep Farming and the Freezing Works in Hicks Bay	48
	Developments in Dairy Farming	50
	Dairying in Hicks Bay	51
	The Situation Today	53
	Household Organisation	53
	Household Earnings	57
	Social Security	57
	Sheep Farming	58
	Wage Earning	58
	Summary	60
	References for Chapter Four	61
	 PART TWO : SOCIALISATION AND CHANGE	 62
5.	Theories of Socialisation	63
6.	Former Practices in Hicks Bay	64
7.	Present Day Practices in Hicks Bay	66
8.	Practices Among Migrant Hicks Bay Families	67
9.	Conclusion	71

List of Figures

	<u>Page</u>
1. Genealogical charter showing Hicks Bays Links with Te-Whanau-a-Apanui.	3
2. Genealogy showing Tuwhakairiora's links with Porourangi - founder of Ngati Porou.	7
3. Genealogy showing strong links between Ngai-Tuere and Ruawaipu.	9
4. Linear links between the Hicks Bay hapu, and seven canoes of the Great Fleet.	20
5. Genealogy showing descent of Ruawaipu from Toi-Kairakau.	24
6. Genealogy showing major Ngati Porou hapu and leading figures in the history and conquest of the Hicks Bay hapu.	26
7. Genealogy showing the writers descent from Tuwhakairiora and Ruataupare.	29
8. Diagram of the bilateral extended family descent category.	40

List of Tables

1. Size of community households in 1939.	55
2. Size of community households in 1980.	56

List of Maps

1. Map showing Hicks Bay location on the East Coast.	5
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INTRODUCTION

Given the fact that change is an inevitable process in all societies, the aim of this thesis is to show the connection between social change and child-rearing practices in a small Maori community.

The study is concerned with social change within New Zealand society, particularly amongst the Maori population of Hicks Bay and the effects of this on the family unit. Although the particular concern was with the influence of the mother-figure on the socialisation process and adaptability of the child, circumstances prevented the full inclusion of this latter part of the study within this thesis. However, a brief outline of these issues and their relevance to the particular Hicks Bay community is included.

A sociological approach is adopted in parts of this study primarily from an anthropological perspective. Social Anthropology examines the different kinds of relationships within a society with particular emphasis on aspects of the culture that are common to other cultures; the institutionalized aspects of the society and the ideas and values that are associated with it.

In this study, the influence of these factors on the social organisation of Hicks Bay is examined and the particular consequences of the socialisation process are described.

Psychological studies on aspects of Maori family life such as those written by James and Jane Ritchie (1957) and Pearl and Ernest Beaglehole (1946) have produced valuable information and stimulating insights relevant to this study. Some of the short stories and novels written by such Maori authors as Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace, and biographical accounts of the lives of Maori elders (e.g. 'Amiria' by A. Salmond) have also provided an invaluable complement and corrective to previous research studies which, when based on a European¹ theoretical framework, have sometimes ignored or misinterpreted certain features of Maori family life. Ethnographic accounts of Maori communities, particularly those by Hugh Kawharu on Orakei, Patrick

1. The term European is used to denote New Zealanders of European stock.

Hohepa on Waima and James and Jane Ritchie on Rakau, have had an important influence on the shaping of this study.

At the level of analysis, a number of theoretical essays, notably those by Raymond Firth, Philip Mayer and Roger Keesing, have provided anthropological theories and models on which to base this study.

I have chosen my own family and people of Hicks Bay on which to base this study - a choice made initially on the basis of familiarity with the data. It was also an area with which I could identify in terms of kinship, and therefore, and in which I felt at ease in terms of analysis. Since my data is based on a study of such a small area however I recognize that the findings should not be taken as having a general application to New Zealand as a whole. Further research complementing this study would therefore provide valuable data for comparison.

Because Social Anthropologists are chiefly interested in social and cultural institutions, the first part of this study is concerned with kinship, descent and social organisation.

Chapter one looks briefly at the history and location of the Hicks Bay community. The focus of interest in this chapter is on the way in which the past in Hicks Bay weighs heavily upon the present, and the patterns of social organisation which are discernable on the basis of genealogical charters.

Chapter two deals with kinship and descent and the way in which these concepts define rights and obligations in kinship terms between the individual and his kinsmen in the community and elsewhere.

Chapter three focuses on family and community life, giving attention to both the internal structure and interrelationships of these units.

In chapter four, we consider the influence of economic changes within the community on organisational principles and values as expressed in the individual's choices and decisions.

Part two concludes this study with a brief sketch of one sector of change within the community, namely child-rearing. This chapter raises several

questions, and in particular the relevance of child-care for a community's structure and functioning. We consider the impact which a European belief system, mediated by members of the educational, medical and other governmental professions has had on patterns of child-rearing in Hicks Bay. Despite the reticence of the people to accept this system, they do accept it, and we see the effects of this amalgam on the community's sense of identity (which members take with them into the outside world) and the way in which this identity has been modified by social contact with the dominant western culture of New Zealand Society.

Finally in this study I have combined aspects of psychological anthropology, in particular studies of child-rearing and socialisation, with a biographical and extended case-study approach. I have also merged the usual community axis with a historical axis in order to understand in depth, and from the inside, changing patterns of family interaction within a small community.

In connection with the preparation of this thesis, I am especially grateful to Professor Hugh Kawharu, head of the Department of Anthropology and my personal thesis supervisor, for his valuable criticisms and suggestions, and his unfailing encouragement. I owe much to my family for their faith in me, and for their support in my work. Lastly, my thanks to Mrs Leigh Reweti for proof-reading the draft of this manuscript, and to Miss Wendy Sigvertsen and Mrs Marie Smith for the typing of it.